

EXCHANGE STUDENTS

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At Putnam County, we have seen a rise in foreign exchange students participating in our school program. We have always welcomed them with open arms but few people got to really know them. They were always well-liked, but those who never got to talk to them probably always wondered how they got here from a different continent and what their experience meant to them. Well, Ms. Tosspon's Journalism class will not let history repeat itself. We interviewed some of the exchange students and created this article so that we can further get to know them and appreciate their journey.

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Kristina is a new foreign exchange student this year who is from Slovakia. Her host parents are Becky and Brian Knight, and she then stays in Martins's town. Throughout her journey traveling to America and dealing with a big change, she most feared not making any friends. She says that school here is different to her because the class periods are longer, the rotation of classes, and how everyone sits at the same table every day. Being far away from home she most misses her family and friends.

Jimena



Jimena who is from Spain came here from the foreign exchange program. One of the things she feared the most about coming here was the plane trip. She is staying with the Webb family while she's here. Some of the things that are different from her school than ours is the lockers and the curriculum is. The things she missed the most is her family and the food.

Kristina





Alessia

Please help us welcome our eldest exchange student, Ms. Alessia! Alessia is a senior this year and has come all the way from Liege, Belgium. Alessia is staying with Willy and Kacy Garland during her stay in America. Traveling at such a young age by yourself halfway across the world has to be nerve-racking, so we asked Alessia what her biggest fears were. In her interview, she stated that her two biggest fears were being alone and that she would miss out on things since life in Belgium would still continue, whether she is there or not. We also asked Alessia what she misses the most about home since she has been here for almost two months. "My parents are really the thing I am missing the most; the relationship I had with them, hugs, habits we had." In her interview, she mentioned how she missed the food back at home and how her mom will send her pictures and further make her wish she was there to enjoy it with her. One of the biggest parts of Alessia's interview was how school was different in Belgium compared to schools in America. In Belgium, you stay with the same classmates all day for two years and the teachers are the ones who move from room to room. You don't get to choose your classes and are required to have two hours of PE every week. Another thing Alessia mentioned was her school in Belgium is more strict than ours. There is less talking, you don't get participation points, and food is not allowed in the classrooms. Also, for every lesson that is taught, you take notes over it all and have to study the notes (sometimes even 15 pages) and take a test over them without a study guide. Of course, we can't forget to mention that in Belgium, you have to dress up every day for school, so sweatshirts won't fly! There are many changes that Alessia had to adjust to when she came to America, but students and staff at Putnam County RI are very glad she is here and hope she enjoys her time here just as much as we enjoy having her!

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Journalism members Amy Stottlemeyer and Hillary Shahan interviewed foreign exchange student Elisabeth from Madrid, Spain. Of course, she had a few fears, in the beginning, perhaps not bonding as well with her new family, or not being able to keep in touch well with her friends and family back home. But she seems to be doing a great job and all of her fears seem to have dissipated. She stays here in town with the Hendees and is more than excited to take part in our school year. It is as pleasant.

She says that she enjoys school here because it is easy and tries to include everyone, she especially likes that we have sports in our school. She says that despite her experience being very positive and that she is enjoying her time here, she of course misses things back home. For instance, friends, family, food, being in the city and getting to walk everywhere. She gave a very pleasing interview and we hope that the rest of her year is just as pleasant.

Elisabeth





THEIR HOMELANDS

Spain is located in Southwestern Europe on the Iberian Peninsula with the capital of Madrid. Portugal lies to the west of the Pyrenees Mountains to the Northeast, separating Spain from France. In Spain, their official language is Castilian, generally known as Spanish. For the past 200 years, Spain hasn't had a consistent constitution, but their most recent one has lasted about 50 years and is still going. Spain's culture has mainly been influenced by Muslims since their invasion in 711 A.D. and they held power for 800 years. Later their population was enriched by a large number of Jewish people further mixing their culture. Their biggest national holiday is Constitution Day on December 6th, which was started in 1978.

Belgium is located in Western Europe with the capital being Brussels. It's bordered by France, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands. Belgium holds the world record for the longest period of having no government. The weather is mostly rainy and humid, Belgium cycles all 4 seasons. Common foods there are cinnamon waffles with syrup, beer, chocolate, french fries, and special meatballs called boulets liegeois. There are 3 different languages in Belgium, Dutch in the North, French in the South, and German in a smaller part of the east. Christianity is the main religion in Europe.

Slovakia isn't just some country, it has its own history and distinguishing facts which separates it from many countries. Slovakia is a landlocked country in Europe which is when a country is surrounded by land entirely, only forty-four countries are landlocked. However, Slovakia wasn't always its own independent country, in the 11th century, what we currently know as Slovakia used to be just another part of Hungary and was part of the highlands. It was also a part of the Czech Republic from 1918 to 1992, that is when they declared independence as their own separate nation. Slovakia on its own is a beautiful country with a lot of mountains nearly everywhere, but the rich history of the country is what makes it different from others.



We hope that you learned a lot about our exchange students and we encourage you to say a friendly 'hello' to them next time you see them. We are sure they would be ecstatic to share more information with you about their lives and their wonderful countries!

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